Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR GORDON S. BROWN

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

Initial interview date: December 14, 1999

[Note: This is an addendum to a previous interview]

Q: This is an addendum to an interview that was done with Ambassador Gordon Brown. There were some parts of it that did not come through, in particular the part 1979 to 1984, which covers your end in Paris. Today is the 14th of December, 1999. I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Gordon, did you have a chance to look at the part that didn't come through?

BROWN: No. I had nothing to look at. I should make a comment, I think, about the rest of my assignment in Paris because - to make it quick - we were talking last time about the U.S.-French bilateral situation. The end of my assignment really wound up much more in a multilateral framework because (if you'll recall) as a result of the oil embargo of 1973, the big and burning issue between the U.S. and France, and the rest of the world in fact, became: How do you deal with the OPEC group? Do you deal with them as a group? Do you set up a countercartel, or do you cooperate with them? The French were very far over towards the cooperation side. Our policy under Secretary Kissinger was pretty far over towards the confrontational side. As a result, we had a bilateral fight with the French which ultimately, I would say, tactically the French won and strategically, we won. Tactically, that is, the French got they wanted which was a consumer-producer dialogue between energy or resource producing countries and resource consuming countries, whereas we got a standfast position - even though the dialogue finally did take place - but we ultimately did confront the OPEC cartel by one means or another. The setting up of this international economic dialogue between producer and consumer countries moved the action closer to the OECD realm. In fact, after I left the embassy, the entire function was moved over to the U.S. mission to the OECD because they felt that was the proper place to do it - as a multilateral negotiation at that point, rather than bilateral.

Q: Did you find that the British and the Germans for example were sort of consulting with you at the beginning? Their oil people trying to figure out...Were they sort of watching this battle between the French and the Americans and waiting to see where the dust fell or...?

BROWN: I think that is about the best way to characterize it. I don't recall their positions very strongly, to be perfectly honest. After this period of time has passed, it would imply that they didn't have very strong positions. It was in many ways a little trilateral struggle between us and the Saudis talking on one track, and the French and the Saudis talking on another track, and us and the French talking on a third track. It was played out in the multilateral...what was it called...the dialogue...I don't even remember. It had a name. The endless meetings were held over at Avenue Clï¿½bert in Paris and dignitaries came from all over the world, and it was a great talkfest and nothing ever was achieved. Ultimately, it was a way, I guess, for the developing countries or the resource producing countries to feel that they were being heard in the other capitals, and it did have that advantage. It defused a pretty aggravating situation at the time.

Q: Well, did Kissinger have a Mr. Oil who would appear from time ttime from Washington?

BROWN: That was Tom Enders who I'm sure you know from others...

Q: Unfortunately, I never had the chance to interview him - a very strong personality. What was your impression of how he operated in this situation?

BROWN: Well, he was a very strong and independent person as you point out. The under secretary for Economic Affairs, whose name escapes me, was a little more soft line than Tom at that point. Tom was playing Kissinger's game to the full - and that was to be as hard-nosed as he possibly could towards the energy producing countries. It got actually comical at times because there was one point, for example, in which Tom obviously was unhappy with the U.S. line for an upcoming meeting. He came into Paris the night before the meeting started. I picked him up at the airport, took him to the hotel. He then had an interview with some journalists which I hadn't known about, in which he told the journalists this conference was going to go to Hell and that everything was...He gave them a very tough line. The next morning I went out to the airport to meet the under secretary. He was furious because he'd read the interview which was entirelopposite to his instructions. There was that kind of thing going on all the time. Various agencies were feuding. There was even a feud within the Department as I just mentioned. In the end, Kissinger saw that there was a need to compromise and let Mr. Enders drift away. He undercut him in short. He used him and then undercut him.

Q: Which seems to be part of the modus operandi. Did you find yourself when these things were going on...You were sort of playing clean up, sweeping behind the elephants in the parade?

BROWN: To a certain extent. I was pretty junior. I was thfactotum really rather than the policy maker.

Q: I was wondering, would you sort of sit down with your French colleagues and you'd both kind of wonder what the Hell was going on or did you try to figure it out?

BROWN: No. No. Relations with the French were such that I wasn't really free to do open heart kind of exploration. I really had to follow the line pretty closely, if I knew what the line was in any given week.

Q: Well then, just after, when you left...You left France when?

BROWN: It was summer of '76. Is that right? Yes. Must have been.Yes right. I went directly to Saudi Arabia if I'm not mistaken.

Q: What was your impression of France overall as being part of the West? Talking to Foreign Service people, I have some who think that the French are a real pain in the ass frankly, and others who say well yes, they may be a pain in the ass but they are with us when times are tough and all this. Where would you put yourself?

BROWN: I'd be in the second school. They are definitely our ally. They just don't like being pulled around by the nose. We have a tendency to ignore them or to treat them with scorn and they react.

Q: Then you were in Saudi Arabia from when to when?

BROWN: Just two years. It was my only two-year assignment I thinin my whole career. It was from summer of '76 to summer of '78.

Q: In Jeddah?

BROWN: In Jeddah, yes. The embassy was still in Jeddah.

Q: What was your job?

BROWN: I was the economic officer who was following oil and money. As you can imagine, those were two interesting subjects to follow. The money thing was an interesting situation because the Treasury Department very much wanted to have its own Treasury attachï¿½ there. Our ambassadors were resisting it. They said, "Here comes Brown; he's a good officer and he'll do all the reporting you want." Well, the Saudis were being very secretive about what they did with their money in those days. They wouldn't tell me, as a junior officer or middle grade officer in the embassy, very much. I wasn't able really to do very good reporting. As a result, the reverberations from Washington Treasury kept saying, "Look at this crap we're getting from your embassy."

State was saying, "Ah, but it's great." I was caught in the middle of that. I was caught in the middle of quite a few things at that embassy and I really didn't like my experience there. I was also supposed to be doing oil reporting and yet the consul general over in Dhahran, whose name I've blessedly forgotten, didn't want me to come over to his consular district and said he was doing a fine job, which wasn't the case. My ambassador kept pushing me...

Q: Your ambassador...

BROWN: Well, the first one was Bill Porter who was oozing on off toward retirement and frankly I think had retired at post. The second one was John West, a political appointee, ex-governor of a southern state.

Q: North Carolina?

BROWN: No. South Carolina. Very interesting guy, but he had hiown agenda. I didn't agree with him very much either.

Q: What was his agenda would you say?

BROWN: Bilateral relations entirely. The improvement of the U.S.-Saudi economic relationship, particularly when it affected contracts which he had friends bidding on. I think he was so wrapped up in that aspect of his job that he ignored some other aspects of his job to the detriment of our policy. But on the bilateral side he was crackerjack, a super ambassador in terms of pushing U.S. bilateral interests. Unfortunately sometimes he also pushed people who were frankly not of a caliber we should have been pushing, as commercial representatives of the United States.

Q: There were some dubious...Not the top rung...

BROWN: Dubious friends of John who showed up bidding on contracts.

Q: We'll come back to that. Let's talk about the money. I would have thought that in many ways, Treasury with its contacts in World Banking, would be the place to find out where the money is going anyway?

BROWN: To be perfectly honest, Treasury knew more about what was going on in Jeddah than we ever could have learned on site, because the Saudis were very carefully putting their reserves in U.S. Treasury notes in transactions which were off the market so that they didn't affect the market rate. They were so large. They were buying huge quantities of Treasury notes.

Q: I assume Treasury was aware of it?

BROWN: The Treasury was totally aware of it; they were negotiating with the Saudi Monetary Authority on a regular basis. Then to have some junior guy at the embassy running around saying, "What are you doing with your reserves" was kind of ridiculous. So I was a cat's paw in this argument really. They didn't expect any reporting. They just wanted their own guy in place.

Q: With the oil, this was '76 to '78. This was during the real oil crisis.

BROWN: Yes, right. This was during the time...

Q: There must have been an awful lot of pressure on our embassy and on our diplomacy to do something. Here are these Saudis- we've been allies with them a long time and we are lining up to get gas. This is not a minor thing. This is alternate days, license plates. It was really a very difficult time.

BROWN: I'm trying to remember at this point and I think I've forgotten exactly when the supply situation actually improved. The embargo didn't last very long if you'll remember. It probably lasted for less than three or four months. So the question then really, after the immediate crunch was over, was what do you now do? Oil prices had reached a new plateau. Supply was tight and looked as if it was going to be tight for some time. How did you handle this new marketplace, rather than the crunch? I think I was probably either still in Paris or en route to Saudi Arabia during most of the crunch. Let's see. When was the war? The war was October 1973?

Q: Yes. It was October.

BROWN: I didn't go to...

Q: So when you went there, it was three years later?

BROWN: Yes.

Q: So we're really talking about high prices.

BROWN: Yes.

Q: Was there a concern...Were we expressing our concern about the third world. In other words, maybe we could absorb it but what does Pakistan do?

BROWN: In two ways we were doing that. One we were doing it rhetorically in the North South dialogue which was still going on in Paris. We were trying to get an alliance between ourselves and the poorer countries against the oil producers, in short; which was cynical, but appropriate to the circumstances.

The second thing, what we were really arguing about or talking to the Saudis about in those days was not drying up the capital pool. In short, not taking all of this huge amount of money which had suddenly shifted in their direction in world trade and sticking it under their mattress. The argument was: recycle, recycle, use the money, keep it in flow so that prosperity returns to the marketplace. If you'll remember, the '73 oil embargo really resulted in a slowdown in producer prices around the world and a slowdown in economic activity which lasted for quite some time. So we were telling the Saudis, "Keep the money pumping. Keep pumping out the money so that people get rich." Well, of course a lot of our people got rich. Not too many of the Indians and Pakistanis to be honest. We did get the Saudis to invest their money in ways so that it did not disappear. We kept it in circulation.

Q: Who would you talk to on the Saudi side?

BROWN: Well, it was largely a question of trying to prepare my ambassador to talk to Zaki Yamani, who was still the minister of oil, and the minister of finance or King Khalid and/or Prince Fahd, who at that time was Crown Prince. Khalid was the king but not a very active king. I talked to people at the staff level in the ministries and so on to get information, but by and large when we tried to make those kind of representations we made them either at the level of the ambassador or visiting people. Secretary Schlesinger, who was Secretary of Energy, came out during that time (and a whole string of high level visitors, as you can imagine) trying to get the Saudis to increase their oil production-both capacity and actual. And to sort of serve, if you will, as the swing producer for oil market requirements.

Q: How did we view the Saudi petroleum establishment? It was Yamani?

BROWN: Yamani was the minister of oil. ARAMCO was still partlowned by the American partners-or partly controlled, in any event.

Q: Were we watching how they operated with the other oil producing...Iran was of course a big one and Iraq at that time. Were they working well together or were there problems?

BROWN: They were working reasonably well together at that time. Iran was still under the Shah. We monitored an awful lot of the market development from Vienna because, as a result of the famous North South dialogue and our own internal dialogue with other energy consuming countries, the International Energy Agency had been established in Vienna - and that became the official place for monitoring the oil market and oil market developments. Not so much the embassy. We were focused on what the Saudis were doing internally to produce oil.

Q: I assume at that time there were agreed upon restraints weren'there, by the various oil producers?

BROWN: I'm trying to remember whether they had the quota system iplace already or not. They probably didn't. I really can't recall.

Q: I can't remember all the details there but I was wondering were we feeling that the Saudis were team players at that particular point?

BROWN: Well, that's why we kept pushing them to increase their capacity because we felt that as long as they had a huge capacity to produce oil, that would always put a ceiling on the level to which the market could rise. Everybody would know that the Saudis could just open the spigot. The Saudis were very definitely on our side at the time and they were trying to buy U.S. arms to indicate the degree to which they had an alliance with the United States. That was another political problem in Washington.

Q: When the Saudis were buying U.S. arms who was the designateenemy for all of this?

BROWN: There wasn't one. The Saudis simply said, "We don't have a modern military to defend our huge space," - and they do have a huge space - "and we need more modern arms."

Of course they ran into predictable difficulties in Washington and that was what John West was working on most of his time, when it wasn't commercial issues. Ambassador West was very effective in getting together a group of senators and congressman who tried to support the Saudi arms sale. Not successful at the time, but eventually successful.

Q: The issue was mainly sale to Saudi Arabia might mean a potential arming of an enemy of Israel? Wasn't that it?

BROWN: That was the way it was seen in Washington anyway. Yes.

Q: Did Tariki play any role at this point?

BROWN: He was out of OPEC. I don't remember who was head of the OPEC at the time. Tariki was no longer active. He was doing oil consultancies. Fanning the fire a little bit, put it that way, wherever he was, but not playing any official role.

Q: Were there a lot of oil operators, international types wandering around in Saudi Arabia?

BROWN: Not so much oil operators. The number of contractors, large and small, American and others, who came to Saudi Arabia in those days was legion. They were trying to get some of that Saudi money. There were a lot of operators around, believe me. Some good and some bad. A lot bad.

Q: Had the Saudis began to turn to contracts with Korean, Filipino, Pakistani firms? In other words, places who could bring in cheap labor, who could come in, do the job, and leave without leaving an impact basically?

BROWN: Yes. They had already done that in some of the major projects. Even with U.S. cooperation. I think, for example, of the naval base which was being built north of Dhahran, with the U.S. Corps of Engineers doing the design and major contracting or project management, and the Koreans doing most of the on the ground contract work with scores of Koreans in hard hats working 12 hours a day and living in barracks. And presumably sending home lots of money.

Q: Well, this of course became the pattern. Also they were less likely to have an impact. They kind of ate their kimche and stayed in their barracks and didn't interfere with society.

BROWN: It was good for everybody concerned, except presumably the Ray Blount construction company, and people like that, who were bidding on the same projects and getting undercut by the people they had trained in Korea.

Q: Although you were dealing with the economic side, what was the feeling about the viability of the Saudi monarchy, the Saudi government, how things were going there at that time?

BROWN: Khalid was a good solid citizen who was doing a pretty respectable job as King. He wasn't an incandescent bulb, but he was pretty good. Fahd at that time had gotten over his playboy stage and was a good solid Crown Prince, doing a lot of the day to day operations of the government. Some of us thought...there was some discussion in the embassy as to whether or not Fahd had the wherewithal to really become a good king - which was obviously going to happen. By and large, I don't think we challenged him, or the House, as the appropriate ruler of the country. There was some air of unreality about it, of course. By and large, they were well entrenched. They know their country. They are suited for the country and we tended to feel that's okay. Obviously, Fahd was a modernizer, who was the kind of guy we hoped would move the country forward. He has in some ways as you know, not in others.

Q: Were we seeing the possible revolutionaries-I'm not sure if that is the right term-within the ranks of the royal family or elsewhere-the middle class or students or anything like that? I imagine with a Kingdom you always kind of look around at who's out to overthrow you.

BROWN: You have to remember first that this was the Klondike period. Everybody was getting rich. Everybody was focused on getting the bucks. There was lots of money to go around. From '76 to '78 when I was there, certainly there was no question of real opposition (or even unreal opposition) to the regime. Everybody was busy trying to make some money off the regime. Sure, the regime is not universally popular, but by and large the middle class is perfectly happy with it. They get what that they want out of it which is a nice, comfortable life.

Q: How about students? Lots of Saudi students in the United Stateat this time?

BROWN: Yes. There were tons of them in the United States. Some of them were presumably being radicalized which we learned subsequently. But the students there were-again this was the time in which the State was building up the universities and pumping kids into the universities. They hadn't yet realized there were no jobs at the end of the tunnel. During that period I was there, the students were not at all restless. They were simply riding the gravy train like everybody else.

Q: When you were there '76 to 78 Carter came in in '77. Was there any appreciable difference in our policy that you noted towards Saudi Arabia after Kissinger left? I guess it would be Vance.

BROWN: No. No not really. Not at my level certainly. It was pretty...Even Kissinger had come around at some point or another to the realization that we needed the Saudis.

Q: Did Israel raise it's head while you were there or was that aissue at all?

BROWN: It's a consistent background issue to any service in the Middle East. Other than the fact that the Israeli lobby was making it difficult to sell F-15s to the Saudis which I wasn't immediately involved in. Although obviously everybody in the embassy pitched in when we had a big visitor. We had Carter. We had the Secretary of Defense. We had all those other people who came. It wasn't until Camp David that the U.S.-Saudi relationship was put to a real strain as a result of what was going on in Palestine and Israel.

Q: How did the Carter visit go?

BROWN: It went fine. It was to my recollection, not terribly substantive and a lot of atmospherics. Good atmospherics. They were fine.

Q: Well then, you left in '78?

BROWN: I came back to Washington and did a year at the IndustriaCollege of the Armed Forces.

Q: How did you find that?

BROWN: That was a great experience. For one, you get a view into the way the military operate and think, which I think is very important as you move on in the Department. Two, it's just a good year. You get to study a lot of things. It's a year for intellectual dilettantism, which I enjoyed. But I really thought that the one thing that as an Economic Officer I got out of it was, as a student at ICAF, was to see the way another large organization tried to structure itself to deal with complicated management issues. Something which the State Department has not been known for addressing in a systematic way.

Q: Did you find you were bringing something to it or I would think in that case, a normal Foreign Service Officer doesn't bring an awful lot of administrative know how?

BROWN: No, I think those of us who were at ICAF, as opposed to the War College, brought to the group that we provided a little bit of political context. We learned a lot in terms of management styles, different ways of structuring problems to break them down into manageable pieces and so on. Unlike at the War College where we were supposed to be the resource for moving the conversation forward. We were the receivers at ICAF and probably the givers at the War College. I enjoyed being at ICAF. I really did. I thought it was much more germane to what I did at the State Department.

Q: Was there a difference between the military officers who were aICAF and the War College?

BROWN: I didn't particularly notice any. We obviously had more management types at ICAF. The Navy, for example, tended to send it's logistics guys to ICAF rather than otherwise. But we all had our share of fighter pilots and battalion commanders and so on.

Q: Then that would be...you were there would it be '78 to 79?

BROWN: Right. Yes.

Q: _____

BROWN: To the Department where I became deputy director of the Office of International Commodities. That was a job which dealt with various international commodity groups, either through the U.N. system or product groups like the Lead and Zinc Study Group and the International Cotton Council, etc. I enjoyed it. I only did that for a year. It was interesting. I got some good negotiating experience in the U.N. context. I learned quite a bit about commodity movements and so on, but in the end my job was not really that meaningful. They had reorganized the office before I got there to create this rank of deputy to kind of back up an office director who had been traveling a lot and negotiating a lot. That was fine for the period and personalities involved but by the time I got there, I had a very together office director.

Q: Who was that?

BROWN: John Ferriter. Who wasn't doing that much traveling and therefore did the day to day management as well so the deputy director was kind of superfluous. My major achievement in that job was to reorganize myself out of it.

Q: You mentioned negotiating. What were you doing?

BROWN: I was the head of any American team that went to UNCTAD on a couple of commodities-cotton being the one I remember the most-but a number of other study groups in the UNCTAD context. It was interesting as a middle grade officer to be the American spokesman at the table, particularly in negotiations which are not very friendly to our position. It taught me to have a thick skin and a strong constitution so I could handle those midnight negotiations.

Q: What were the issues with cotton?

BROWN: Cotton was not that tension-producing. Typically, the producing countries wanted to get together as a group and set prices. The problem for them in cotton was that we and the Russians were major cotton exporters. So the Somalians, and the Chadians and Sudanese and the Egyptians didn't really have that much leverage. So cotton was a relatively easy one to deal with, because we had strong friends on our side of the table against setting up a cotton cartel. Some of the other ones were a little bit more touchy. I didn't get involved in too many of them as I remember because I wasn't there that long.

Q: So you were doing this cotton from '80 -'81, was it?

BROWN: No. That was...

Q: '79 to '80?

BROWN: It would have been '79-'80. Then I was recruited to head the Office of U.N. Economic Affairs in the International Organizations Bureau. That was fine because I was just in the process, as I said, of reorganizing the office in the EB bureau where I was. So I moved over to IO, where I also dealt with international negotiations on commodity and other North South issues.

Q: You did that from what '81 to...?

BROWN: I must have been there over two years.

Q: '81 to '84.

BROWN: No, '80 to '82, I think. Yes.

Q: Who was the head of IO during this time?

BROWN: The first one was Dick McCall. Then the administration changed and the Republicans came in and with the Republicans we had Elliot Abrams as our assistant secretary. A controversial guy-still is. He was at that point the youngest assistant secretary ever to hold the job. He was, I thought, very good. I was very impressed by him in spite of my readiness not to be impressed by him. He knew what he wanted, but he was fair-minded enough to talk to everybody before he made up his mind-overtly anyway. So you always felt you had a chance to get to bat and to swing at the ball. You often missed. Most of the time you missed, in fact, because Abrams generally knew what he wanted before the discussion started and he wasn't easy to sway from his position, but at least you felt you could argue the case with him if you had a differing opinion. I thought he was a pretty good assistant secretary given the line we were then following which was fairly confrontational.

Q: Particularly you were there when the Reagan administration came in which did not come in with a rosy feeling-warm fuzzy feeling-towards the United Nations. Was that obvious?

BROWN: It was so obvious that when the Republicans were elected in, my colleagues in the Bureau and I began to try to figure out ways to sort of defend some interests we thought we had in the IO area. One of the things which we did before Elliot Abrams came in and he approved of, if I'm not mistaken-at least anyway he didn't undo it - was to take some of the economic agencies in the U.N. system which we thought were doing reasonably good work - or at least work which shouldn't be politicized by us, who had always been arguing against politicization of U.N. agencies. We grouped them together. I can't remember how it had been organized before, but we grouped them together into a new office which we established called IO Technical Affairs or Technical Agency Affairs, IO/T. We gave it as dull a name as we could think of and put together these organizations like the World Health Organization, the International Postal Union, and a few that were a little bit more controversial like the International Labor Organization and the UN Industrial Development Organization, and UNCTAD. So we put them all into one office and tried to kind of make it boring enough so that Jean Kirkpatrick, who we though was going to be a very strong ally of Elliot Abrams in terms of gutting the budgets of any organization that she didn't like, would not have her attention drawn to it in many ways. We set up this office, which has had some management advantages too, because I see it is still in existence. In a way we succeeded because those agencies were pretty much left alone by the Reagan administration - which tended to focus at that time on UNICEF and a few other organizations which they felt were outrageous from their political point of view.

Q: While you were there, I assume that when the Reagan administration came in, everybody assumed sort of a defensive posture, rather careful about everything?

BROWN: One thing that the Reagan administration did, which Mrs. Kirkpatrick deserves a lot of credit for, was that they made our stance on the budgets crystal clear and indicated that they were prepared to expand leverage to get what they wanted. We had been talking for a long time in the U.N. system about the need to get the budgets under control, the need to kill programs which no longer served purposes rather than just setting up new programs all the time without ever having sunset provision on old programs and so on, so on. Frankly, under the Democratic administration, there had been a lot of talk and not much push. The thing that the Republicans came in and did was they put a lot of push to that, saying we are not going to fund this organization unless you clean up your house. They started making some strong conditionalities which in the end backfired to some degree because Congress took it up and carried it further. By the time I left IO in '84, the people in New York were definitely listening to us when we went up there and said, "We've got to cut this budget or at least cut the rate of growth of this budget." And so for the 10 or so organizations which fell under the management of the IO/T Office, which I was then heading, it meant that we could go to the annual meetings with a budget line which people would listen to for the first time in years and we were serious about it. So it had its advantages and I think it has kept some of those organizations from self-destructing.

Q: Were you observing...How did the relationship between Abrams anKirkpatrick go?

BROWN: Well, ideologically of course, they were a brother and sister act. The relationship between an assistant secretary and an ambassador in that field is never totally free of thorns and they had their problems. Elliott wanted to clear things that Mrs. Kirkpatrick wanted to decide and she-if you remember, I think, she was even sitting on the cabinet-so she and Elliott had their periodic dust-ups. But they didn't have ideological differences. It was typically "Who is in charge here?"

Q: What was your particular slice of this U.N. side?

BROWN: For a year, I was going to New York on North South dialogue issues, before the administration change. I moved over to the new office where we were simply doing budget management of some 10 or so organizations. So I was focusing on who was going to be the next Secretary General in this or that organization, and how big was the budget going to be, and were there jobs there for Americans, and those kind of management issues for these organizations.

Q: What was your impression at that particular time of thorganization and administration of the United Nations?

BROWN: The Secretary General, even if he wants to, is not able to control that organization very effectively unless he is a very strong personality. Particularly the independent organizations have strong secretary generals of their own and they only depend on the Secretary General for their budget in many ways. If the Secretary General doesn't have somebody leaning on him he doesn't have much ability to lean on them. In many ways, the Secretary General, I think, doesn't have much power relative to the directors of the independent organizations. It's perhaps, again, continued U.S. pressure on the Secretary General since the Reagan years that have given the Secretary General more strength. He now has more power relative to those Secretary Generals of the independent organizations than he used to because he knows that he is not going to get his budget and therefore he has more leverage to use on them and to get them to control their budgets.

Q: Did you get involved at all in the relations with...for some reasoit's escaping me...the social council, was it UNISEC?

BROWN: Economic and Social...

Q: Yes.

BROWN: Yes. Well, that first year I was in IO when I was going out to New York, the North-South negotiations were either in that committee; or more often in the Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly which was conducting some great big global negotiation on world economy, a totally useless operation-but it took a lot of time and effort.

Q: Were you running across, in the IO staff in Washington and also in the U.N., political appointees who were essentially with the idea of trying to get the United States out of the U.N.?

BROWN: No. Not so much at my level. But again these technical organizations, if we put up people for high positions in those organizations, they were people who were technically qualified to deal with the issues at hand. We were talking about relatively specialized organizations with the exception of perhaps the United Nations Industrial Development Organization or UNCTAD where we didn't have any senior level Americans anyway. I think most of that kind of pressure was against UNESCO.

Q: That's the name I was thinking of.

BROWN: Which didn't fall under my office. Eventually ILO became a bone of contention - not while I was there, but afterwards. And we withdrew from ILO. That was always a problem. UNIDO became a problem.

Q: UNIDO being?

BROWN: United Nations Industrial Development Organization. Which had as its goal the industrialization of the South, of the developing countries. So it obviously had a built in conflict with us. We withdrew from UNIDO for a while.

Q: Then you had another job which was from when to when?

BROWN: I transferred directly over to the Economic Bureau in 1982. I was for two years head of the Maritime Office, a small office which dealt with negotiations on cargo sharing for scheduled freightliners.

Q: I would imagine it's been so long since the United States was major shipping power, but was this still of interest to us?

BROWN: It's of interest obviously to the maritime lobbies, which were relatively powerful in certain states in any event, and had some clout on the Hill. It was of interest to the defense establishment which felt that it was essential to maintain some kind of American capacity to carry dry cargo. The idea was if we weren't going to subsidize the American lines any more (which we were gradually working our way out of-that is subsidizing) how else could you keep them viable? And the answer was to either assure they get an agreed share of cargo in the trades or a monopoly on U.S. government cargo, or both.

What we were doing in the international arena was trying to maintain a certain kind of free market over cargoes coming into the United States, whereas the developing countries wanted to have cargo sharing assigned by administrative means. They would have liked bilateral agreements between countries in which it was agreed to share the cargo 50-50 or 60-40 or whatever. We were saying, "No. No. A free market gets the best deal for American consumers."

So there were negotiations in the U.N. context about cargo liners and there were also a steady negotiation amongst the Western Europeans (in the context of OECD) about how we would organize our own North Atlantic and North Pacific cargo operations. Would they be based on free market principals or would they be based on administrative assignment of cargoes? It was an interesting job and a job which nobody else in the Department had any interest in, so I was fairly free to operate. I would essentially get my instructions about once a quarter or once every six months from the under secretary for Economic Affairs. The assistant secretary of Economic Affairs scarcely paid any attention to me. I showed up at his staff meeting once a week and he would say, "Is everything okay?"

I would say, "Yes." And that was sufficient for me to operate fothe rest of the week.

So it was a fun job in the sense that I had very few things to worry about in terms of the endless clearance process in the department. The only time I would raise waves in the Department was when some country with which we may have had comfortable bilateral relations suddenly started behaving in an anti competitive way in the shipping arena, and I would come down and start threatening port closures or other administrative actions against them. Then we would obviously have a fight with the desk. I needed the assistant secretary to back me up at those times, but the rest of the time he let me operate pretty freely.

Q: Who were some of the players that you had to deal with-countries?

BROWN: Brazil was a big problem for us. They tend to believe in managed market places. China. We had a long and fruitless negotiation with the Chinese. We were looking forward to opening negotiations with the Soviets. That never quite happened. We were preparing for it all the time I was there but never got around to it. We had problems with a number of other countries. Venezuela was another problem area. We went to negotiations in a number of these places. By and large we dealt with issues in a very slow and measured fashion. Nothing ever came to a crisis.

Q: What about the flags of convenience-the Liberian-Panamaniathing? Did that enter your sphere at all?

BROWN: Well very definitely because one of the arguments against open competition was that open competition lead to this kind of dangerous flag registry, where the people who issued those flags were not necessarily enforcing international standards in labor or safety, or anything else. An open market position did have a drawback, and it was vulnerable to criticism. So we attempted through various international bodies of the U.N., the Coast Guard liaisons around the world, and through various safety organizations, to pressure Panama, Liberia and other places to run their shipping operations in accordance with international standards. We weren't terribly effective in doing that.

Q: Did you have to close any ports to anybody?

BROWN: We threatened it occasionally but not while I was around. We worked very closely with the Federal Maritime Commission and we at various times threatened retaliatory action. They have an administrative law process over there at the Commission which is exceedingly tedious and time consuming and lawyer driven, so it was interesting to take part in that and watch it, but we were never the driver. We were kind of the backseat kibitzer.

Q: Well then you left that in '80...?

BROWN: '84. I moved back to the Near East Bureau and became director of Arab Peninsula Affairs - which meant essentially Saudi Arabia and the other countries in the Gulf. To be very brief about that assignment: it was a two year assignment, and the major part of our time was consumed by still another effort to sell arms to the Saudis. We pushed that peanut down the hall with our noses for the better part of the two years and didn't succeed, and it took an awful lot of time and an awful lot of effort.

Q: Did you find...Was this was purely political? Was this sort of outside the Department or were you finding yourself having to sort of be opposed to the Israeli desk and things like that?

BROWN: No, and we weren't opposed to the Israeli desk. We didn't have an internal fight in the Department. The Department was, I think, of one mind and that was that selling the Saudis arms was in our foreign policy interest. After the Defense Department and the intelligence community ground its wheels for some time and came up with a relatively neutral finding in terms of the impact on the global strategic balance, we felt that we had a Defense Department okay to go ahead as well - or should I say Defense community okay - to push that forward. The opposition to the whole thing obviously came from the Hill. Saying that the Department was in favor of the arms sale does not mean that the Department fought for the arms sale, however. That's a different issue. We didn't expend very much political capital at the level of the Secretary of State.

Q: I would have thought the Saudis would have looked around ansaid, "Okay, we'll buy a French or..."

BROWN: Well, they did in the end. If my timing is right that's when they signed that multi billion dollar deal with the British to buy Tornadoes - which made a lot of money for British contractors.

Q: What was our feeling about that? It was a normal outcome.

BROWN: Yes. Obviously the manufacturers of F-15s and their supporters were chagrined. The rest of us shrugged our shoulders and said, "Well, that's what you get when you can't support a protected sale. You get your friends selling for you."

At least we were glad that the Saudis would never even considebuying from the Russians or anything like that.

Q: You were dealing with the Saudis during Desert Storm. Did they use the Tornadoes at all?

BROWN: Yes. They used them. They liked them. They are good planes. They prefer the F-15. At least they tell us.

Q: Did you find...What period was this? '84 to '86?

BROWN: Yes.

Q: Who was head of Near Eastern Affairs?

BROWN: Dick Murphy was the assistant secretary and he was deeply involved, as almost all assistant secretaries tend to be, in the peace process. I kept trying to get him to come out to the Gulf to visit his little satraps and embassies there, but he never could organize a trip to the Gulf in the two years I was there.

Q: Well this seems to have been the story again and again that our Near Eastern Bureau ends up-almost by default or by pressure or something-ends up dealing with the how many hundred square miles of former Palestine-Palestine/Israel?

BROWN: Well, it's true. It's inevitable because that's the politically most demanding and the strategically most significant element of our Middle East policy. That's exactly why Steven Solarz made the Department create the Southeast Asia Bureau - to get India to have some identity of its own. The Gulf will probably never have terribly much identity of its own - which isn't a bad thing to be perfectly honest, because there have been efforts by Kissinger and others-to devise a policy in which the Gulf was treated as a little entity all by itself, that had no connection with what was going on between Arabs and Israelis over on the Mediterranean Coast. That's a false concept too because you can't unlink the Gulf from the rest of the Arab world. So, if the Gulf is in the backseat that's not too serious. While I was country director it wasn't really terribly serious at all because the major interlocutor in the Gulf after all was, and is, and will be, Saudi Arabia. Ad Prince Bandar was a very effective spokesman for Saudi Arabia here in Washington, with the net result that our embassy quite frankly (as well as the desk I might add) quite often were ignorant to what the real exchanges were between the U.S. and Saudi government because Bandar was talking to the National Security Council or the Vice President or President or somebody like that and we didn't know about it.

Q: This period the Iran-Iraq War was on?

BROWN: Yes. That had started...

Q: It started about '80 didn't it?

BROWN: Yes, very shortly after the revolution. So it must have beeabout '80. Yes. Anyway, it was on.

Q: How were the Saudis reacting to this?

BROWN: Well, if you'll remember we were all helping the Iraqis when we thought that the Iraqis were on the ropes because we distrusted the revolutionaries in Tehran so much. The Saudis were financing Saddam and were happy to do so because he was seen as the savior of the Arab world at that point. The real fear was that if the Iranians won, they would be such a kind of troublesome hegemon in the Persian Gulf that the Arab kingdoms and principalities on the West side of the Gulf wouldn't be able to breathe. So they were perfectly happy to see Iraq fighting their fight for them.

Q: At that time Iran, from the Near Eastern point of view...Obviously we didn't have relations, still don't-was that seen as an overall menace from that particular perspective?

BROWN: That was the time when the Iranian government was kind of virulent in its propaganda and its revolutionary rhetoric. The Pasdaran or whatever its called - The People's Forces - were completely out of control. One never knew whether major incidents could be started without the blessing of the Supreme Command in Tehran. Yes. It was seen as a very, very dangerous situation as far as the security of the Gulf was concerned and the security of oil supplies. I don't recall the exact sequence of things but there was shooting up and down the Gulf during much of the time I was on the desk.

Q: Were we making...Were you aware of any sort of plans to protect the Gulf States and the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia in case Iran was successful?

BROWN: Central Command had been set up by that time and Central Command had a mission to go into the Gulf. It did not, at that point, I think, have a game plan for defending Saudi Arabia. It had a game plan for defending Iran, ironically, against the Soviet Union. So the capacity was there but the plans and the kind of logistical planning and everything that has to under gird any kind of serious military planning of that nature wasn't in place. It wasn't in place until later.

Q: So it wasn't part of the thinking at all?

BROWN: It was part of the thinking. I think thinking was shifting but relatively slowly. We were unable-to use current terminology-we were unable to make a paradigm shift in a timely fashion.

Q: So your basic concentration was on airplane sales or militarsales?

BROWN: Yes. And there was a civil war or other troubles in Yemen which bothered us because we thought the Soviets were diddling around there. There was a dust-up between Bahrain and Qatar while I was there, and there were various other small mini crises. The Libyans dumped some - or what we presumed were the Libyans-dumped some mines into the Red Sea at one point and we had to send minesweepers out to help the Saudis clear up their waters. So there were these little crises that came up. The main issue really, the big time consuming issue, was relations with Saudi Arabia and specifically defense relations.

Q: During this time was there any feeling, I mean, this was way over the horizon, but it was driving us and I was wondering whether it permeated down to where you were the Soviet Union under Gorbachev was changing or not?

BROWN: People were watching it and scratching their heads but I don't think anybody was doing any strategic thinking about it. Nobody in the Middle East could, I think have foreseen that the Soviet Union would suddenly stop being a player.

Q: Well then, I think, does this sort of end where we...

BROWN: I think more or less it does, yes. I think we last time were in the middle of my assignment to Jeddah which was the following assignment.

End of interview